

# THOSE THE GODS WISH TO DESTROY

A few comments on the current political scene by  
M.A. Tarr, M.P. Pietermaritzburg South.

Two important events overshadowed the 1982 session of Parliament. The first was the split in the Nationalist Party and the formation of the new right wing Conservative Party under the leadership of Dr. A.P. Treurnicht. This split has more far reaching consequences than any other previous split in Nationalist ranks such as for example the break-away of the Hertzog group and subsequent formation of the Herstigte Nasionale Party. Firstly there is little doubt that the Conservatives enjoy widespread support, particularly in rural areas. Surveys show this support to be in the region of 18 percent of the popular vote with potential for growth. As a result of this it has not been possible to expel or remove Conservatives from many organisations such as the Broederbond and D.R.C. Churches who traditionally support the Government. The effect of this has been to reduce the political significance of these bodies. They no longer represent the rallying points for the Nationalists which they used to because they themselves are divided.

The second event was the long awaited report of the President's Council. These two events are of course not unrelated. The split was over the issue of power sharing and the P.C. report advocated a limited form of power sharing. Any form of power sharing however departs from the basic philosophy of the Conservatives and is thus totally unacceptable. Thus while the P.C. report and recommendations showed little change from the status quo for most South Africans what little progress there was in moving towards power sharing and a more just society was too much for the Conservatives. To a certain extent the split opened up the debate in Parliament. Government speakers showed a greater willingness to engage in constructive debate with the opposition. This was in marked contrast to previous sessions where speakers simply spoke past one another and engaged in pointless acrimony. Another effect was that the Government found itself looking at a mirror image of itself a few years ago. Hopefully this proved a sobering experience for some of the Nationalist members. The Government also found themselves being attacked from both sides. They in defending themselves against the Conservatives often had to put forward views in favour of ideas they themselves recently opposed (mixed sports clubs for example). On the other hand when attacked by the P.F.P. they were no longer able to find refuge in the racialistic ideology of old, now championed by the Conservatives. Increasingly they tried to justify themselves on rational grounds : a not very easy task.

## THE BUTHELEZI COMMISSION REPORT

This report also saw the light of day during the current session of Parliament and also proved to be a historic document. The terms of reference of the Buthelezi Commission were to make recommendations relating to the future political and economic dispensation for Natal. To the extent however that their findings could also relate to the rest of South Africa it is interesting to compare the Buthelezi Commission and Presidents Council.

The first and most important difference between the two was representativeness. The Buthelezi Commission endeavoured to include as wide a spectrum of opinion and representation as possible. Bodies such as the Nationalist Party that did not serve or give evidence to the Buthelezi Commission did so of their own choice, not because they were not asked. On the other hand Black South Africans were specifically excluded from the President's Council. In addition most members of the President's Council were nominated.

There is little doubt that many of these nominated members cannot claim to represent the communities they are purported to. The P.F.P. also of course refused to serve on the P.C. just as the Nationalist Party refused to have a representative on the Buthelezi Commission. There is however a fundamental difference in the reasons. The P.F.P. refused because of the exclusion of the Black South Africans while the Nationalists refused because of their philosophy of finding different political structures to accommodate Whites and Blacks.

The second fundamental difference was the basic philosophy behind the two reports. The Buthelezi Commission, started from the standpoint of full and equal citizenship rights for all South Africans. Having accepted this the problem was to design a Constitution which would ensure that the goals of full and equal citizenship rights for all were achieved and at the same time eliminate the possibility of minority groups being dominated in any adverse way. Consensus was finally reached and all the bodies represented on the Commission except the New Republic Party signed and accepted the report. On the other hand the P.C. does not subscribe to the principle of full and equal citizenship rights for all. This is apparent by the exclusion of Blacks and also equally apparent in their first report where for example the retention of the Group Areas Act and thus by implication the Population Registration Act is recommended.

It is thus hard to imagine how any constitutional proposals emanating from the P.C. can enjoy any legitimacy or chance of long term acceptance or success among Black South Africans. On the other hand constitutional proposals emanating from the Buthelezi Commission because of its composition and basic philosophy are far more likely to enjoy general acceptance and provide a foundation for a future legitimate constitution.

The only rational grounds on which it might be possible to exclude Blacks from the P.C. are if it would be possible to meet Black aspirations within the framework of independent homelands. This of course is National Party philosophy. Black people will have to exercise political rights through their respective homelands and cease to be South African citizens. This philosophy it could be argued may even possibly work if the homelands were economically viable and able to support their populations. This is clearly not the case. Most Blacks will continue to live and work outside the homelands. The homelands are totally dependent on grants from the S.A. Government.

Black labour is the backbone of our industrial economy and will soon make up the bulk of the skilled labour corps. Most Black people want full and equal South African citizenship rights. They are becoming increasingly militant in their demands and this will be expressed through all channels open to them legitimate or otherwise. The homelands, self governing or independent states, call them what you wish, cannot meet Black aspirations which, when all is said and done are no more than the right of every individual to enjoy full citizenship rights in his country of birth.

The exclusion of Blacks from the P.C. together with the fact that the homelands are not going to satisfy black aspirations represents an exercise in delusion on the part of the Nationalist Party. There are no rational grounds to expect their policy will work. The only grounds on which they are based are ideological prejudices and the problem faced by Nationalists is not one of constructing a new constitution but a logistical one. The question is simply; while we continue to adhere to the basic philosophy of apartheid, how long can we hold out? Smith held out for 16 years in Rhodesia. Pressures and forces for change grow at an exponential rate. It does not seem likely that the Nationalists in South Africa can hold out much longer.

## THE NEW CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS

The recent proposals by the Prime Minister seem to be a belated recognition that people of other colour must be included in the power structure. Looked at in isolation the new proposals do represent an advance insofar as Indians and Coloureds are concerned. Never before have these two groups been directly involved in the decision making process with Whites. The proposed new constitution has however been carefully structured to ensure that it is dominated by White Nationalists so in practice little has really changed. The fatal flaw in the proposals is again the exclusion of Blacks. The proposed new constitution thus has within it the seeds of sowing increasing racial polarisation between Blacks and other groups. This is the reason for the rejection of the plan by the P.F.P. In rejecting the plan the P.F.P. is not opting for an all or nothing strategy. It is also not unmindful of the problems being faced by the Prime Minister. Were he to have included Blacks in his proposed new dispensation on the same basis as Coloured and Indians it is unlikely that he would be Prime Minister today. Following from this the argument runs that in the circumstances the Prime Minister deserves support from the White electorate for his initiatives. This the P.F.P. cannot allow to happen for two reasons. Firstly it would represent an unacceptable compromise on its principles. Such a step would also destroy any trust which the Party has built up with other groups including its own White supporters. In the current climate in South Africa any links and trust that has been established between groups no matter how fragile must be nurtured. Secondly support for the Prime Minister now reduces the pressure for change which is so desperately needed. It reduces the pull from the bodies opting for change and makes him more mindful of the pull exerted by the Conservatives. It is thus imperative that the P.F.P. continue to exert pressure for change in the direction dictated by the best interests of all South Africans. We would be failing in our duty to South Africa were we to be seduced by the Prime Minister and his current initiatives.

## REFORM OF SOUTH AFRICA

Recent years have been filled with much talk and rhetoric about reform. Newspaper reports give the impression that the current constitutional proposals are only the beginning of a process of reform. The same reports talk of the "hidden agenda" for reform which the Prime Minister dare not disclose at present for fear of losing support. He and his Government must apparently gradually "condition" Nationalist supporters to the idea of change.

This argument is one which is also swallowed by the more gullible. It is only necessary to study some of the legislation passed during the last session to dispel any illusions of a government bent on reform.

To start with the last session saw the passage of the Internal Security Bill. This Bill saw the consolidation of all previous security measures rather than any meaningful improvements or changes. Provisions for indefinite detention without trial, house arrests and bannings of individuals at the Minister's discretion still remain. Publications and organisations which the Minister deems are a threat to the security of the State can also be banned. Other legislation was also passed aimed at bolstering the position of the Government. One piece of legislation which was not passed in its original form was the Registration of Newspapers Amendment Bill. This piece of legislation arose out of the Steyn Commission Report and clearly illustrated the Government paranoia about imposing some curbs on the press. The Bill originally sought to establish a Statutory Body which would exert disciplinary measures over the press. Vigorous opposition from the P.F.P. and all sections of the press resulted in the Government back tracking and making certain amendments to the original Bill. The statutory body which the Bill originally sought to create is now a voluntary one and the immediate threat to the press from this source is over. The Government over the years has however passed numerous laws all of which restrict in some way the right of the press to report events. This obsession with controlling the press or forcing it to censor and discipline itself can aptly be summed up in the saying; Show me a country's press and I will tell you what sort of Government it has. The opposite is also true. Show me the Government and I will tell you what sort of press a country has. The Laws on Co-operation and Development Bill is another Bill which was passed and limits the public's access to knowledge. This Bill provides for secrecy in connection with matters dealt with by the Commission for Co-operation and Development. This Commission deals mainly with land consolidation and when one considers recent events in Ingwavuma it is easy to understand the desire for secrecy.

Many other Bills of a similar nature to the above were also passed during the last session. They were all aimed at either withholding information about Government actions from the Public or on the other hand restricting public opposition to the Government. Examples of such Bills are Demonstrations In or Near Court Building Prohibition Bill, the Intimidation Bill and the Protection of Information Bill. All these Bills contained measures which most societies would consider reasonable but they also contained other measures extending the discretionary powers of the Minister far beyond what most societies would regard as acceptable.

Yet another disturbing piece of legislation passed this session was the Defence Amendment Bill. Much has been written and said about this piece of legislation. There are certain positive features such as the more even distribution of the

defence burden among whites but the overall effect is to make provision for a drastic increase in military service. Obviously the Government are planning for the worst possible scenario. What the Government should do is to create a just and fair society. It would then not be necessary to have such a large defence commitment and the defence load could be and would be gladly carried by all South Africans. The passage of the above Bills should dispel any illusions one may have of a Government bent on reform. One can only assume that increasing unrest is expected. The foregoing legislation is obviously designed to cope with the symptoms not with the basic cause of the problems in South Africa.

In support of this legislation South Africans have been subjected to the constant refrain about the total onslaught which is facing us. There is little doubt that such a total onslaught exists. What the Government will not or cannot appreciate is that the roots of the total onslaught lie in their policies. They provide the fuel on which South Africa's enemies thrive and which polarises South Africans. The Governments' inability to recognise this fact has led to passage of the above and all other repressive legislation in South Africa. The philosophy seems to be that; If the message is bad, kill the messenger. Legislation of the above nature is not the sort of legislation which a government bent on reform would pass. Rather it is the type of legislation that a Government bent on forcing through its policies would pass. It is the type of legislation to be expected from a Government which is losing the legitimacy to govern.

Envisaged legislation for 1983 does nothing to dispel this. The 1982 session saw the passage of the Black Local Authorities Bill one of the original Koornhof Bills that were withdrawn. This Bill is the first in a series of bills aimed at controlling and regulating the lives of Black people in White areas. The Bill was generally welcomed because for the first time Black Local Authorities have the same powers as White Local Authorities. In addition they are now able to have freehold land in White Areas. Draft versions of the other two bills (The Orderly Movement and Settlement of

Black Persons Bill and the Black Communities Development Bill) have now been published and instead of making it easier for a Black to have permanent residence rights in a White area make it more difficult. These bills taken together strengthen the conviction that the Government will force through its policies no matter what. There are also no indications that the Government intends altering its policy on resettlement and Black spot removals. These policies have caused more human misery and suffering than any others. One wonders how many Nationalist M.P's for example have ever been to places like Thornhill in the Ciskei. Or it is a case of out of sight out of mind?

The Government handling of the Ingwavuma land deal with Swaziland is also a point in question. At no stage was there any consultation with KwaZulu. Their motivation seems to be two pronged. Firstly the proposed Ingwavuma hand-over is obviously tied to the Ka Ngwane deal. When Ka Ngwane becomes part of Swaziland nearly one million South African Swazis will lose their South African Citizenship. As a quid pro quo for accepting one million new citizens Ingwavuma was the bait. This is in line with Government policy of having no Black South African Citizens. The second reason appears to be, to provoke Kwa Zulu into accepting independence by showing them how little power they have at present and humiliating their leadership. This issue clearly illustrates the Government commitment to its ideology.

At present we are thus faced with a Government which will not see the facts as they are in South Africa. Instead of formulating policies to deal with our problems and promoting a harmonious multiracial society they instead formulate policies that cope with the symptoms of our disease and policies based on their own fears and ideology. In the long run they will solve nothing. What is needed is a clearly defined acceptable goal towards which all South Africans can work. There is the old saying which goes; Those whom the Gods wish to destroy they first make mad. Let us hope that sanity prevails before the final madness overtakes us.□

#### DR K'S CLARIFICATION

I am a Christian.  
I am Minister of Co-operation.  
I obey my God and pray to him.  
I see my position as one of great responsibility.  
I regard all men as my brothers.  
I insist on the implementation of my Department's policy.  
I am a humble man: let no-one misjudge me.  
I cannot tolerate exceptions to our regulations.  
It is malicious to say that I do not live by my faith.  
It is foolish to say that we should not move a million blacks.  
It is illogical to use my actions as arguments against my faith and integrity.  
The fact is that those people simply have to go.  
My heart glows with love for my fellow men.  
They have to go because it is our policy.  
I thank God daily that I am not a hypocrite.  
Our policy is Christian because it is logical.  
I thank God that my belief permeates my life.  
What are the small sufferings of some individuals against the beauty of a divine plan?  
My Christian convictions comfort me.

*Vortex*